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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 WARSAW 000022

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TAGS: OREP PREL MARR MCAP NATO PL CZ RS

SUBJECT: CODEL TAUSCHER VISIT TO POLAND

Classified By: DCM Quanrud for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: CODEL Tauscher emphasized to Polish interlocutors December 17 that the U.S. remained committed to missile defense (MD), but insisted that the long-range component must be realistically tested and certified effective before deployment. In the meantime, Tauscher said Congress would continue to appropriate funds for short- and medium range MD systems like THAAD, Aegis, and Patriot (PAC-3); longer range programs could be integrated later. Tauscher said she had told Russian officials during her preceding visit to Moscow that the GoR should not perceive technical delays in MD deployment as diminished U.S. support for MD. She also solicited suggestions on how the U.S. and Poland could demonstrate their close security ties.

¶2. (C) Polish officials welcomed Tauscher's message. The Sejm Defense and Foreign Affairs Committee Chairmen assured the CODEL that the Ballistic Missile Defense Agreement (BMDA) would be ratified easily when the supporting agreements are concluded, and the Foreign Affairs Chairman reiterated GOP interest in acquiring Patriot missiles. Tauscher assured parliamentarians from the Slupsk area that the U.S. remained committed to a land-based mid-course MD system although construction might not be based on previous timelines. The Prime Minister's Political Cabinet Chief Slawomir Nowak enthusiastically agreed with Tauscher's comments on the need for NATO allies to address the short- and medium-range ballistic missile (S/MRBM) threat presented by Iran, as well as the threat posed by longer range missiles. Nowak also agreed that the U.S. and Poland should continue to engage Russia in confidence-building measures, but he asserted that MD development should move forward without regard to Russian rhetoric. CODEL's meeting with Foreign Minister Sikorski and Deputy Defense Minister Komorowski reported septel. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (SBU) Representative Ellen Tauscher (D-CA), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces of the House Armed Services Committee, led a bipartisan delegation to Warsaw December 16-17 for talks with Polish officials and elected representatives on MD, the status of transatlantic relations, NATO, and Russia. The visit to Warsaw immediately followed the CODEL's stop in Moscow. CODEL Tauscher met with FM Sikorski, members of the Sejm Defense and Foreign Affairs Committees, local parliamentarians from the Slupsk region (site of the proposed interceptor base), and the Head of the Prime Minister's Political Cabinet.

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LEGISLATORS WELCOME CONTINUED U.S. SUPPORT FOR MD  
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¶4. (C) Janusz Zemke and Krzysztof Lisek, Chairmen of the Defense and Foreign Affairs Committees, respectively, welcomed Tauscher's message of continued U.S. support for MD

and assured the U.S. delegation that the Polish parliament would easily ratify the BMDA. Zemke noted that three of the four political parties currently represented in the Sejm (Poland's lower house of parliament), equating to about 400 of the body's 460 members, and virtually the entire Senate favored BMDA ratification. Robert Tyszkiewicz of the Foreign Affairs Committee underscored that the decisive argument in favor of Polish support for MD was the value of the transatlantic link to the U.S., which was crucial in building a Western consensus to deflect Russian pressure.

¶ 15. (C) After describing increasing Polish defense spending -- consistent annual expenditures at the rate of 1.95% of a growing GDP -- Zemke asked how the financial crisis might affect U.S. MD funding. Tauscher assured him that the Democratic Congress would continue to approve funds for MD. She emphasized, however, that the U.S. would revert to the traditional "fly before you buy" rule of only purchasing proven systems; the effectiveness of the MD system would have to be certified by the Secretary of Defense. Tauscher added that she had made clear to Russian officials that an MD system will eventually be deployed in Poland, but it will not be aimed at Russia.

¶ 16. (C) Lisek said Warsaw was interested in acquiring the Patriot missile system. Tauscher replied that she favored deployment of the PAC-III system in Poland but acknowledged funding constraints in both countries. She said the U.S., with support from NATO allies, including Poland, should concentrate on the development of short- and medium-range MD systems like PAC-III, THAAD and Aegis and eventually

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integrate longer-range MD programs after they had been fully tested and certified. Representative Doug Lamborn (R-CO) reinforced Tauscher's view that long-range MD systems should be thoroughly vetted but said he would support deployment of the mid-course radar system in the Czech Republic even if interceptors were not installed immediately in Poland. Lamborn added that funding for MD research and development would continue.

¶ 17. (C) Lisek told the CODEL that Polish and Russian parliamentary representatives had recently discussed the possibility of hosting a conference that would explore various aspects of MD. Participants would be drawn mainly from the U.S., Russia, Poland, and the Czech Republic. Lisek said his Czech counterparts had expressed support for such a conference during a meeting last month. Tauscher thought a conference could be useful in building consensus around the need for MD, provided it were held in a neutral location like Geneva, perhaps next spring.

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SLUPSK PARLIAMENTARIANS: ALL POLITICS ARE LOCAL  
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¶ 18. (C) Tauscher assured parliamentarians from the Slupsk and Pomeranian region that the U.S. remained committed to a land-based mid-course MD system, although construction and fielding of the European Interceptor Site (EIS) could occur on a less aggressive timeline than previously discussed with them. She reiterated the need for the system to be further developed before full commitment to construction. The parliamentarians appreciated her remarks and offered insights into the debate in the Slupsk area regarding the EIS and the community's consideration of other possible uses for the site.

¶ 19. (C) Eugeniusz Smolar, head of the Center for International Relations, said Poland did not feel there was an "existential threat" from Russia, but was concerned about the possibility of a cyber-attack. He worried that an increasingly assertive Russia might intervene in Azerbaijan, where the government was trying to take a balanced position between Russia and the West; Russian aims in Ukraine are also a concern, but Smolar argued that the Ukrainian political leadership is so

hopelessly divided that it is hard to help them. Smolar said that falling oil prices could serve to curb Russia's aggressive external policies, but hard times in Russia would hurt Putin's popularity and could lead to an internal crackdown. Congresswoman Sanchez said that Russian police had arrested a hundred protesters during the CODEL's stay in Moscow.

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PM'S OFFICE THINKING IN LINE WITH TAUSCHER  
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¶10. (C) Congresswoman Tauscher briefed the Prime Minister's Political Cabinet Chief, Slawomir Nowak, on the Codel,s preceding visit to Russia and emphasized that the Russians should not mistake a technical delay due to the need for further testing as bowing before Russian pressure. She told Nowak there should be a common message from NATO, as well as from individual members, to Russia on MD, including S/MRBMD. Nowak agreed, emphasizing that all threats needed to be addressed. He said that Poland does not see a threat from Iran, but it will work with the U.S. to support the growing bilateral strategic relationship. Nowak asserted that Poland,s threats lay not far from its borders and thus Tauscher,s emphasis on short and medium range missile defense was welcome. He opined that Russia was more afraid of the radar in the Czech Republic than the ten interceptors in Poland.

¶11. (C) Tauscher observed that effective systems for S/MRBMD were currently available, and NATO and Russia could discuss them in an effort to reach agreement on a common threat, without giving Russia a veto over Alliance decisions. Nowak enthusiastically endorsed Tauscher,s comments. He called for a good-faith effort to engage Russia in confidence-building measures, while NATO continued to develop a three-tier missile defense system with or without Russian endorsement. Representative Loretta Sanchez commented that the US-Poland relationship will not be crafted in Moscow.

¶12. (C) Nowak noted that Poland plans to purchase the PAC-3 Patriot Missile defense system, and Tauscher responded that Congress will support Poland. Nowak concluded by stating that Poland and the US were moving forward on MD, citing

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ongoing Status of Forces Agreement negotiations and planned Patriot deployments despite Russian rhetoric.

¶13. (U) CODEL Tauscher has cleared this message.  
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